

## Losing Faith

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Summary: Post Halo 2: The Arbiter decides the future of the Elites lies away from The Covenant, and strikes a deal with Commander Keyes and Sergeant Johnsonâ€¦

## Losing Faith

\_Spoilers for the end of Halo 2, including First Strike\_

**\*\*Losing Faith**

> <strong>

> <em>Halo Delta control room<em>

"Well," Sergeant Johnson lit a cigar, "What are supposed to do? Just sit here and wait for Truth to activate the rings?"

"What else can we do?" Commander Keyes asked, "\_In Amber Clad\_ was taken over by the Flood, and there are no other UNSC ships in this sector."

"Truth can not be aloud to succeed." The Arbiter looked down on Tartarus' mangled body, "He has betrayed everything The Covenant stands for. I can no longer believe in The Great Journey. My people have been cast out, so we will find our own destiny."

"Be careful Arbiter." Half-Jaw hissed, "What you saw borders on heresy."

"Is it?" The other Elite looked at him, "The Prophets told us that the humans are an abomination to be cleansed, yet they never told us why. Truth saw to it that Regret was killed, and allowed Mercy to be taken by the Flood. If the Prophets, the corner stone of the Covenant, cannot be trusted then neither can their teachings."

"I am forced to agree." Half-Jaw nodded, "Arbiter, with the death of the Council, you are the leader of our people: we will follow wherever you lead us."

"All that matters now is that we stop Truth from activating the rings." The Arbiter turned to 343 Guilty Spark, "The Ark, it is on the Homeworld of the humans?"

"No." The monitor bobbed up and down, "The Ark is the Homeworld of the humans."

"Excuse me." Commander Keyes stepped forward, "Can you just answer me one question: who built the rings?"

"Why you did." Guilty Spark sounded somewhat surprised, "How could you not know this?"

"Are you trying to tell me that humans built this thing?" Johnson held his cigar in one hand, "That don't make no sense."

"But you had a Reclaimer with you?" Guilty Spark looked at the humans and Elites standing before him, "His armor was outdated, but he was able to recover the index on Instillation 04. If not for the intervention of the Construct, the rings would have been activated by now."

"He must mean the Master Chief and Cortana." Johnson smiled, "I always knew that boy was something special."

"Humans are Forerunners?" Half-Jaw sounded even more shocked than Keyes and Johnson, "What have we done?"

"Nothing that can not be made up for." The Arbiter turned to key, "I know you have no reason to trust me, but it is in our best interest to work together. My people are engaging the Brute ships in orbit of High Charity: I can have one of them transport us to your Homeworld so we can stop Truth from activating the rings from the Ark."

"I can't speak for all my people, but we'd appreciate the help." Keyes nodded, "We need to find the Master Chief and Cortana."

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><p><em>Covenant Holy city High Charity<em>

Cortana swam through the sea of information that was the Covenant computer network, trying to eliminate the last traces of the AI she had encountered earlier. Every time she tried to activate High Charity's self-destruct systems, the other AI stopped her. This was starting to annoy Cortana, and she was so preoccupied she didn't notice another ship exiting slipstream just outside the battle.

\* \* \*

><p>Space around Halo Delta<p>

The sleek ONI stealth Prowler bypassed the battle raging between the Brute and Elite ships, dodging the odd shot that came its way. The pilot fixed their eyes on the main screen: two UNSC locator beacons where signalling from the Halo.

"What should we do?" She asked the ships only other occupant.

"We land." The other woman strapped herself into the co-pilots seat, "We need answers, and this is the easiest way to get them. Relax: you'll get your chance to fight again soon enough."

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><p><em>Surface, Halo Delta<em>

"This has got to be the dumbest thing I've ever done." Sergeant Johnson shook his head as he stood outside the control room.

"I don't know: your file says you've done some dumb things in the past." Commander Keyes laughed, "And if you've got a better idea of how we're going to get off this thingâ€|"

"No sir." Johnson stamped his feet to keep warm, looking to where The Arbiter and Half-Jaw were deep in discussion with the surviving members of their unit.

A supersonic boom from the upper atmosphere caught everyone attention, and they looked round to see the Prowler dive towards them, its thrusters firing constantly to bleed off its forward momentum. It levelled out just a few hundred meters above their heads and banked round in a wide circle before coming down to land on the wide stone step in front of them.

"This craft is one of yours?" The Arbiter asked.

"Yes, but I don't know where it came from." Keyes nodded as she raised the Plasma Rifle she'd acquired in the control room, aiming it at the craft, "It could be floodâ€|"

The hatch on the side of the Prowler opened with a hiss of escaping atmosphere, and the Elites aimed what weapons they had at the opening, ready for anything. The echoing footfalls of a Spartan surprised them all.

"That ain't the Chief." Johnson spat out the remains of his cigar, cradling his Brute-shot in both arms, "Different dents in the suit."

"It's good to see you again, Sergeant. Commander" The Spartan saluted, "Spartan-087 reporting for duty."

"Kelly?" Johnson blinked, "How in the hellâ€|"

"I can explain." Dr. Catherine Halsey, founder of project MJOLNIR, stepped out from behind the cyborg, "We found Forerunner ruins that led us to this location. We had hoped to reach it before the Covenant, but we arrived in the middle of a battle." She looked at Half-Jaw and The Arbiter, "Friends of yours?"

"It's a little complicated, but right now our goals are the same: we need to stop the Prophet of Truth from activating the Halo's from a Forerunner instillation on Earth." Keyes walked over to the Prowler, "We need this ship: Cortana and the Master Chief are up on High Charity, and I'm not leaving them behind." She turned to the Elites, "You coming or what?"

Half-Jaw looked at The Arbiter, who shrugged before following

Sergeant Johnson into the spaceship.

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><p><em>Forerunner vessel, Earth orbit<em>

The hatch gave way under one last blow from the Master Chief's foot and flew across the room, hitting the wall with a loud clang. The Spartan stepped through the opening, Plasma Rifle in each hand.

Somewhere on this ship was the Prophet of Truth, and John fully intended to choke the very life out of him with his bare handsâ€|

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><p><em>Covenant Holy city High Charity<em>

Cortana smiled to herself as she finally managed to corner and eliminate the Covenant AI that had been hindering her attempts to activate the self-destruct system. She stopped when she realised that her own destruction was now imminent: with the Master Chief gone, there was no way for her to get off the ship.

"Good luck Johnâ€|" She sighed as she started the countdown.

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><p><em>Orbit of Halo Delta<em>

"Dr Halsey." Kelly looked at the communications system, "I'm not picking up Johns transponder."

"What?" Halsey sounded worried, "Scan again."

"Still nothing." The Spartan did as she was instructed; "I'm picking up a UNSC transmission from \_High Charity\_, audio only."

"Put it through." Keyes ordered.

The sound of a lone bugle playing the last post echoed around the Prowlers cramped control room.

"What the hell?" Johnson asked, confused.

"Cortana?" Halsey blinked, then hit a control on the communications system, "Cortana, this is Dr Halsey: get over here, now!"

There was a buzzing sound over the radio, and then the AI's holographic form appeared above the main consoles.

"Doctor?" Cortana looked surprised to see her creator, "What are you doing here?" Her eyes went wide when she saw Half-Jaw and The Arbiter sitting next to Johnson, "What are they doing here?"

"Needs must." Keyes shrugged, "Where is the Master Chief?"

"He managed to get aboard Truths ship before he left." Cortana explained, "I stayed behind to make sure \_High Charity's\_ self-destruct went off: the Flood used \_In Amber Clad\_ to infiltrate

it, and the Covenant where losing the battle."

"If that big rock out there's going to blow, shouldn't we get the hell out of here?" Johnson asked, wishing he had a cigar.

"Good idea." Keyes nodded, "Cortana: take control of the ship and get us back to Earth. The Covenant knows where it is, so the Cole protocol is useless."

"Slipstream drive online." Cortana nodded, "Several Covenant ships have broken off from the battle; they seem to be joining in formation behind us."

"Friends of yours?" Dr Halsey turned to the two Elites sitting in the back of the cabin.

"We only seek to destroy Truth for his crimes against our people." The Arbiter explained, "What comes after is a matter to be discussed later."

"I have to agree. Besides, what have we got to lose?" Keyes shrugged.

"Very well." Dr Halsey nodded, "Ok Cortana, take us home."

"I hope I don't regret this." The AI muttered, "Slipstream in 5â€|4â€|3â€|2â€|1â€|NOW!"

\*\*The Endâ€|\*\*

\_Until Halo 3 comes out\_â€|

End  
file.